

## Discussion Notes

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Mark 12:28-34

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### Introduction

- Jesus is in temple and has been answering questions from the religious leaders.
- Up to this point, all of the questions have come in a way to try to trap Jesus. Thus far, Jesus has answered in ways that have amazed the crowds and kept the religious leaders from finding anything to pin on him.
- This final question (the last one asked to Jesus in public, aside from the trial) is a little different. The religious leader, a scribe to be exact, asks his question more out of curiosity than with intent to try to trap Jesus.

*28 One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"*

*29 Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. 30 And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.'\* 31 The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.\*' No other commandment is greater than these."*

*32 The teacher of religious law replied, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other. 33 And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbour as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law."*

*34 Realizing how much the man understood, Jesus said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.*

### Verse 28

- This leader is impressed with Jesus' earlier responses and genuinely wanted to know Jesus' thoughts on the greatest commandment.
  - Their dialogue is much more friendly than from the other leaders.
- Jesus is being asked to pick the greatest commandment out of about 613 commandments that had been counted in the Pentateuch.
- Some religious leaders tried to sort these laws in to major and minor laws.

- Application:
  - We sometimes find ourselves doing the very same thing. We look at certain commandments and justify breaking them because they are not as serious as the other ones.
  - We also get so caught up in following these commandments that we miss the heart of why we are following them.
  - This is when our faith becomes religious and legalistic, which makes Jesus' answer just perfect. Just like the Pharisees.
- Jesus does a fantastic job at explaining the heart of the commands.

### Verses 29-30

- The first was from Deuteronomy 6:4 – LOVE GOD
  - This command begins with the “Shema”, a Jewish confession that declares God is the one and only God.
  - This is important as it sets the stage for the command to love God with everything you possibly can.
  - Jesus even adds “mind” to heart, soul and strength to really get it point across. We are to love God with our WHOLE being! (soul = life)
- What does this look like?
  - Like in the Shema, we need to love God as the only God. A God that we put nothing else before.
  - This is a full surrender of everything in your life to Him.
    - Remembering back to Jesus' teaching on paying taxes to Caesar.
      - We are to give our everything!
- Deuteronomy 6:5 follows this command by stating the importance of being submersed in the word.
  - “And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today.”
- If we love God with entirety of our being, which means it will change how we handle everything in our lives.
  - Finances, work, school, time, health, home.
  - And of course, our relationships...

### Verse 31

- It is important that we remember that these commands go hand in hand. We cannot love others the way that God is calling us to if we do not fully love Him first. But we cannot claim to love God if we do not love others.
- The second command came from Leviticus 19:18 – LOVE OTHERS
  - Neighbour
    - In the Leviticus scripture our neighbour is referred to as fellow believers. But Jesus explains in Luke 10 (the Good Samaritan) that our neighbour is now everyone.
    - EVEN THE LEAST OF THESE!

- As yourself...
  - This is when the good ol' golden rule comes in to play: "Do unto others as you would have them do to you".
  - We all know deep down in our being that we want to be loved by others and that we deserved to be loved.
  - Let's put ourselves in others shoes as we are dealing with them and remember that we should be treating them in the same way we would want to be treated.
  - This includes even those who are hardest for us to love! Because even the least of these deserves to be shown some love, even if you feel they haven't earned it.
    - Is that not what God has done with us?!
  - The Leviticus text is in the context of showing mercy and forgiveness and I believe this is something that we can do to truly show love to our neighbour.
- Love Yourself
  - What if we can't even love ourselves?
  - This brings us right back to the importance of giving our all to God. We need to have the image of God imprinted on us.
  - When your identity is in Christ, that's when you begin to change and transform.
  - If you're having a hard time loving yourself, talk to someone about it and start to get back to the place where your identity is Christ. He will work from there.

### **Verses 32-34**

- This teacher was close to the kingdom of God, but not quite close enough.
  - He agreed with the truth, which Jesus spoke, but wasn't able to come to the place of admitting that Jesus was the Savior.
  - The teacher reiterated the Shema, but with only three components: heart, understanding, and strength. He left out the most essential ingredient: loving God from one's whole life (soul), which is the price of authentic discipleship.
- Application:
  - Some of us can understand and even agree with Biblical truth, yet never fully accept it in our hearts.
  - There needs to be a point of surrender and transformation in order to take that step in becoming a true follower of Christ.
  - In order to truly become a follower of Christ, we need to confess who Jesus is and what He did. Once we surrender to Christ and the truth of who He is, the true transformation in our lives starts to happen.

### **Summary**

Romans 12: 1-2, 9-16

### **Discussion Questions**

- What are your initial thoughts of this passage?
- Have you ever found yourself approaching the commandments like the Pharisees and teachers of the law did?
- Have you had that experience of moving from just knowing the truth to actually surrendering fully to God? If not, are you open to it?
- Who are “the least of these” in your life? How can you love those who are hardest to love?
- Do you struggle with loving yourself? What image is printed on you? Where are you finding your identity? Who can you talk to in order to help you deal with this struggle?
- Did anything from Romans 12 speak to you?
- What are some next steps for you to take from what you learned in this passage?